



TESTIMONY ON HB 549 - "Fair Wage Act of 2023"

TO: Chair C.T. Wilson, House Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Fran Teplitz, Executive Co-Director for Business, Investing & Policy, Green America and Director of Green America's Green Business Network
DATE: February 27, 2023
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Good afternoon. My name is Fran Teplitz and I serve as the Executive Co-director for Business, Investing & Policy at Green America and as Director of Green America's Green Business Network. I have lived in Maryland for most of my life and for the last 20-plus years have resided in Silver Spring.

Green America is a national membership organization dedicated to harnessing the power of the economy – of businesses, investors, and consumers – for social justice and environmental sustainability. Our Green Business Network includes nearly 100 in Maryland and Green America has 13,000 individual consumer members in the State.

I am here to register support for HB 549, the Fair Wage Act of 2023. HB 549 is needed because we need a faster timeline for increasing the state's minimum wage – by October 1, 2023 – and linkage of the minimum wage to the consumer price index. Wage increases through minimum wage legislation in 2019 do not keep pace with inflation and the corresponding rising costs of workers' basic needs. Now is the time to prevent economic backsliding due to inflation by ensuring that the minimum wage is tied to the consumer price index. Montgomery and Howard Counties index their minimum wage as do 19 other states.

When workers cannot meet, or barely meet, their basic economic needs while working full time, something is wrong, and Marylanders deserve better.

Workers, of course, are also consumers. With more money, minimum wage workers can help strengthen the local economy and make possible additional job creation. Extensive research demonstrates that increasing the minimum wage does not increase unemployment or business closures.

Workers who help bring businesses to life and who are the most valuable asset to any business – must be compensated adequately with protection against inflation.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 549. Thank you very much.



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